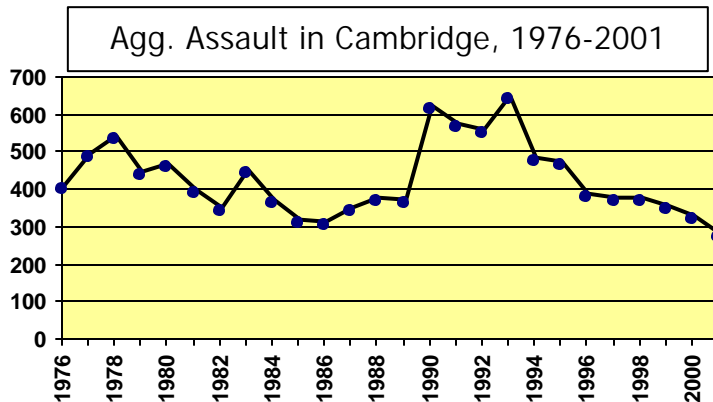


322 in 2000 · 272 in 2001 · 16% Decrease

# Assault



*Aggravated Assault describes an unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault is usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm. Attempts are included since it is not necessary that injury result when a gun, knife, or other weapon is used which could and probably would result in serious personal injury if the crime were successfully completed.*

Unlike murder, robbery, and other violent crime, assault is born in the heat of the moment. The offender's motivation during an assault is rarely personal gain, and the offender often later regrets the incident. Perhaps the most preventable violent crime, many assaults in the making are probably curtailed through the careful use of control and restraint, or through the intervention of bystanders and police.

However, assault is a very serious crime because of the great risk of critical injury to the victim. Very often, blind luck or quick medical attention is all that separates an aggravated assault from a murder.

Between 1984 and 1989, assault registered about 350 incidents per year; in 1990, it suddenly jumped 41 percent to an unprecedented 614 reports. It peaked at 643 in 1993; since then, it has declined each year. 2001's total is the lowest total since 1986.

A good portion of these fluctuations can be attributed to the frequency of which the crime is reported to police, rather than the frequency of its actual occurrence. As domestic violence awareness has increased over the last decade, so has the willingness of domestic violence victims to report abuse to the police.

Despite advances made by domestic violence victim advocates in recent years, experts estimate that between 50 and 80 percent of domestic assaults are never reported to the police. Very likely, apathy, fear of police contact, embarrassment, and other factors also lead to underreporting of alcohol related fights,

assaults between acquaintances, gang fights, and conflicts among the homeless. The result is that assault statistics based on police reports are probably not reliable enough for effective long-term policy decisions.

## Assault Categorizations

A chart of aggravated assault classifications over the past two years appears below. This year, 27% were **domestic** in nature—a percentage slightly lower than past years. An analysis of domestic assaults and other crimes appears in the *Domestic Crimes* section of this report.

The second highest category of aggravated assaults during 2001 was **juvenile/ gang** related incidents, which also saw a decline in numbers, at 18% when

compared with the 2000 totals. Area 4 saw the most juvenile activity this past year, accounting for eight of the thirty-six incidents. The corner of Washington Street and Columbia Street and its surrounding area saw the most activity of juvenile encounters, where, in all of these cases, the victim and their assailants knew each other. There was arrest on Columbia Street, along with another on the corner of Bishop Allen Drive and Douglass Street, which has been a longstanding spot for altercations.

Type	2000	2001	2001 % of Total
Domestic	115	73	27%
Juvenile	44	36	13%
Acquaintance	35	31	11%
Traffic/Parking	31	19	7%
Bar/Liquor	25	18	7%
Drug Deal	2	2	1%
Affray/Brawl	0	13	5%
Psychotic Episode	3	6	2%
Unprovoked	16	36	13%
Homeless	19	7	3%
Workplace	9	13	5%
Landlord/Neighbor	8	5	2%
Police Officer	5	7	3%
Retail/Patron	10	6	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>272</b>	

**"Unprovoked"** aggravated assaults accounted for 13% of the assaults this year, mostly occurring in Area 4. Due to the heavy foot and motor vehicle traffic in Central Square, there is more opportunity

for unprovoked attacks from persons whom do not know each other. Most of the victims reported that they were just walking down the street when attacked, and were usually the results of the rage of others. Of the six incidents in Area 4, four of them involved a weapon such as a rock and/or firearm; two occurred in Central Square while the remaining two occurred in Inman Square.

**Acquaintance** assaults range in scale from drinking buddies or roommates to 'friend of a friend' or classmates. Two types of acquaintance assaults—**workplace** assaults and **landlord/neighbor** assaults—are singled out as unique categorizations. The impetuses behind these acquaintance assaults are as varied as the locations and times at which they occur, for various reasons.

**Retail/Patron** assaults are a special kind of incident in which the patron of an establishment assaults a clerk or manager. These assaults are often linked to shoplifting; store employees attempting to detain a shoplifter are struck in the shoplifter's escape or attempt to escape. This category of assaults has dropped by 50% when compared to last year's data.

**Traffic & Parking** assaults are a reflection of the "road rage" often discussed in today's news. One driver cuts off another, takes "someone else's"

## Relationships

Another way to look at aggravated assaults is to classify the relationship between the offender and the victim. Many, but not all, of the assault categorizations are based on this relationship. This list shows the relationship between the offender and the victim in the 272 aggravated assaults:

Relationship	Total	%
Stranger or Unknown	63	23%
Misc. Acquaintance	89	33%
Romantic Partner	20	7%
Spouse	14	5%
Ex-Romantic Partner	10	4%
Parent/Child	7	3%
Co-Worker/Employee	11	4%
Client/Patron	25	9%
Neighbor	7	3%
Sibling	5	2%
Ex-Spouse	2	1%
Schoolmate	15	6%
Landlord/Tenant	3	1%
Third Lover	0	0%
Teacher/Coach	0	0%

parking space, honks his horn, exchanges an

offensive look or gesture, and suddenly someone is attacking with a tire iron or other weapon. In past years, we have found that these assaults tend to increase in the winter, when some residents fight over the few parking spaces that are shoveled out. In 2001, many assaults were the result of traffic accidents, heightening the operators' road rage, as was the case during the one arrest for this crime

## Weapons Used in 2001 Aggravated Assaults

Weapon	Total	%
Hands/Feet	105	39%
Knife	42	15%
Automobile	21	8%
Bottle/Glass	17	6%
Household/Kitchen Item	14	5%
Handgun	18	7%
Telephone	2	1%
Stone/Rock	6	2%
Furniture	6	2%
Bicycle Lock	1	0%
Bar / Pipe	16	6%
Umbrella	0	N/A
Chemicals/Spray/Poison	4	1%
Chain	0	N/A
Belt/Strap	0	N/A
BB Gun	0	N/A
Fire	4	1%
Scalding Liquid	1	0%
Hammer	1	0%
Canine	2	1%
Razor	0	N/A
Flashlight	1	0%
Other/Unknown	11	4%

category.

## Assault Trends Observed in 2001:

Although not concise and distinctive crime patterns, the following trends in violent behavior were noted in 2001.

- Juvenile assaults in the vicinity of the Galleria
- Road rage in the 100 to 300 blocks of Cambridge St.
- Bar related fights in Central Square
- Gang activity in the 300 block of Rindge Avenue
- Traffic and parking altercations in Central Square
- Assaults of the homeless along Albany Street
- Bar related assaults in the 300 block of Mass Ave.
- Assaults of the homeless in Harvard Square
- Domestic altercations in Central Square
- Domestic assaults at Walden Square
- Juvenile altercations at Bishop Allen Drive & Douglass Street

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## Serious Assaults

Many assaults either end with immediate life-threatening injury to the victim or have the potential to. Here are some examples from this past year:

- Police were dispatched to a home in Area 4 for a domestic situation where the male suspect assaulted two other males. The culprit hit one man in the head with a baton and stabbed the other male in the chest 4-5 times before he was arrested.
- On June 26 at 9:00 p.m. a young male was shot while in Jefferson Park. The unknown suspect approached this male and stated, "what's up". The suspect then proceeded to produce a silver handgun and shot the victim in the shoulder. For unknown reasons, the victim fled to Rindge Ave. where two uninvolved persons found him in a truck the following day.
- During the first week of August there were two similarly related incidents involving handguns at Charles Park near the Galleria. Just before 3:00 a.m., a female was sitting on a bench when two male suspects came up behind her, placed a handgun to the back of her head and pulled the trigger while demanding "weed". The shot missed the female, and the suspects fled. A similar incident happened to a male approximately one half hour before this incident where a handgun was placed to the back of his head and "weed" was demanded. No one was hurt in either of these situations and no one was identified as suspects.
- Roosevelt Towers is often a hot spot for assaults, as it was in a domestic situation in October. The known suspect entered the victim's vehicle and began punching her, threatening to kill her and her family members. After the use of force, the male suspect had the victim drive around and eventually end up at Roosevelt Towers where a second victim got into a physical altercation with the suspect. The suspect then stabbed the male victim in the head and fled the area. The female victim sustained a swollen left cheek and abrasions to her shoulder and neck while the male victim had to be brought to Beth Israel for miscellaneous injuries.

In 33% of aggravated assaults, there was no injury to the victim. In 33% of cases, there was "mild" injury (e.g., a black eye, a bruise, a small cut); 20% showed "moderate" injury (e.g., several bruises, a large cut, a sprain or small broken bone); 11% "serious" injury (e.g., a broken bone, unconsciousness, severe bruising, a deep cut); and 4% "life-threatening" injury (e.g., a gunshot wound or stab wound in a vital area, any injury requiring immediate surgery). In 25% of cases, the victim required hospital care.

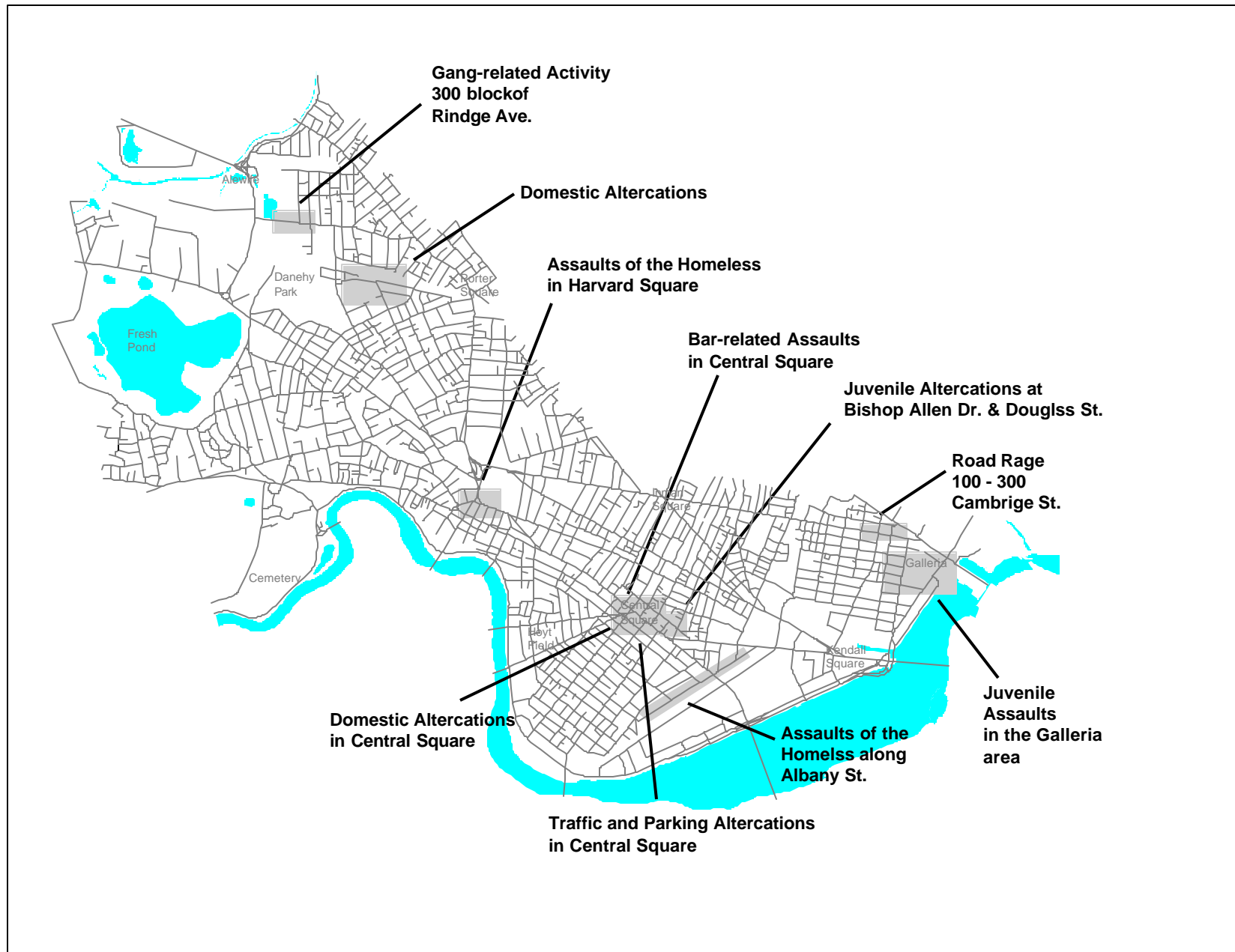
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## Simple Assault

Simple assaults, unlike aggravated assaults, are not scored among the Part I Crimes. Simple assaults do not involve the use of a dangerous weapon and are not intended to cause—and do not cause—serious injury. Examples of simple assaults include a shove, a punch in the stomach, or a slap in the face.

714 simple assaults were reported in 2001, skyrocketing 27% from the 561 incidents reported in 2000. Yet, if lack of reporting is a problem for aggravated assaults, it is probably doubly so for simple assaults, since they do not by definition result in serious injury.

Simple assaults are similar in categorization to aggravated assault, though a larger percentage of them—33%—are domestic in nature. Where juvenile assaults accounted for a large portion of the aggravated assaults, this categorization only accounts for 6% of the simple assaults in 2001.



## Aggravated Assaults Involving Handguns 1997-2001

### Rindge Avenue

Incidents in this area were clustered on Rindge Avenue and on White Street. Most of the incidents involved acquaintances. No handguns were fired.

### Walden Square Road

Incidents in this area were clustered around 21 Walden Square Road. Incidents were clustered on Saturdays and often occurred between acquaintances. Several assaults following traffic disagreements were also reported. No handguns were fired.

### East Cambridge

The majority of incidents in this area were domestic in nature and were concentrated in the 200 and 600 blocks of Cambridge Street. A high concentration of incidents were reported between Saturday and Monday. Two assaults were committed during drug deals. Both of those drug deals occurred on Charles

### Central Square

The majority of incidents reported were between acquaintances. Several unprovoked assaults were also reported. Two assaults were reported at bars, including an incident where a Lynn man pulled out a gun at the Cambridgeport Saloon and shot an acquaintance in the abdomen. The 400 block of Massachusetts Avenue and 152 Columbia Street reported multiple incidents.

★ Handgun shown  
● Handgun Fired

